

# **CONFLICTS AMONG RESOURCE USERS: THE CASE OF KABANGAJA FISHING AND FARMING COMMUNITY ON LAKE VICTORIA (TANZANIA)<sup>1</sup>**

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Conflict is used to designate any relationship between opposing forces, whether marked by violence or not. The word encompasses not only the manifest aspects of the opposing forces but the underlying tension between them. Conflicts originate in the different perceptions of the parties involved regarding who should manage, use and benefit from a resource (Desloges, 1997: 34). Ultimately, the reason why conflicts over resource use should arise are as a result of competing claims over a resource. These become accentuated particularly if the resource is scarce and claimants to the resource are many.

Conflicts over the appropriation and management of common property resources can pose significant problems for the creation of sustainable management strategies. Often, there are long standing conflicts between government and private sector, as well as among and within communities, over fisheries resources, their use and management. With the emergence of trade liberalization and the globalisation of economies, fisheries resources are coming under increasing pressure from a growing number of actors. Often, these are more powerful than communities both in terms of the investments they can make and the harvesting technology they are able to employ. With increasing demands on a decreasing resource base, the number of conflicts within communities themselves are also on the increase, creating mistrust

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between communities, and hampering the introduction of participatory methods of resource management.

Conversely, if community managerial action turns upon a commonly perceived dilemma – such as resource claims made by outside agencies – then management systems may well arise (Wilson, 1982). It is common throughout small-scale fisheries around the world that the management systems developed seem to be more pre-occupied with minimising the potential for conflict between groups of resource users, than they are with conserving the resource *per se* (cf. Alexander, 1977; Forman, 1967; Leveil and Orlove, 1990).

Alternatively, efforts to resolve conflicts may originate from beyond those in conflict. Such external interventions can, on the one hand, mitigate some of these conflicts but, on the other hand, can also exacerbate them and even create new ones.

This paper explores the conflict between two ethnic groups in a fishery: migrant Ha fishermen that have settled on the shores of Lake Victoria; and resident Sukuma people. In Tanzania, changes have been made to the formal managerial structure of Lake Victoria's fisheries which have introduced so-called Beach Management Units (BMUs) to most fishing communities around Tanzania's sector of the lake. These have been seen as a way of delegating some responsibilities for the management of the resource base to communities. The BMU strategy of fisheries regulations expects fishing communities to enforce government fisheries regulations. As such, there is no community involvement in the design nor implementation of the regulations with which their BMUs are charged with enforcing. It is this external intervention that has opened up old wounds in the competing claims over the resource base at the study site examined in this paper, Kabangaja.

The conflicts that permeate Kabangaja's communities are multi-dimensional (as many resource use conflicts are), and are based on land (space), fisheries management, economic and socio-cultural factors. These problems have exacerbated efforts to implement the

BMU managerial strategy and, conversely, the introduction of the BMU at Kabangaja has exacerbated the community's internal conflicts.

Considering the importance of these issues and the lack of information on the linkages between fisheries policies and conflicts, this paper concludes that it is important for the fishing industry in Tanzania to look closely examine these conflicts. They are crucial in the understanding of the social processes that may one day generate the sustainable management of the fishery. Conflict should not be viewed as the dysfunctional relationship between resources user groups to be avoided at all costs, but as the constructive change and growth of society.

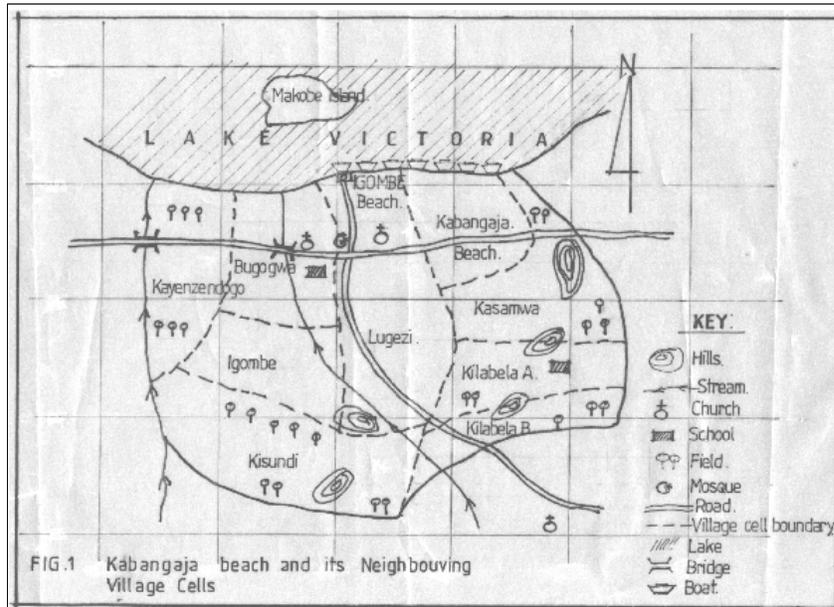
### **Research methods and sample selection**

This paper draws on interviews with 33 fishers at Kabangaja beach, carried out in November 1999. Two focus groups with fishers and two with elders and village leaders from the farming community were also held during the follow-up visits in August, and December 2000.

Respondents were selected randomly from a list of the beach's fishers. Respondents for the focus group discussions were obtained using stratified sampling procedures. Seven to ten people over 18 years old were invited to attend the discussions. In-depth interviews with influential actors within the community were also carried out. To strengthen the relationship between the two sampling techniques, some of the questions posed to fishers were also posed to the focus groups.

### **Community members' origins**

Kabangaja is one of nine village cells at Igombe village in Mwanza Rural District (Fig. 1). Igombe has a population of almost 5,000 while



Kabangaja has a population of about 1,000. Of these, 224 are fishers based along the shoreline of the village cell. 215 of the fishers are thought to target *dagaa*. The remaining fishers comprise beach-seiners, gill-netters and long liners.

The name 'Kabangaja' is derived from the Sukuma word '*kenganza*' meaning a forest with lions in it, which used to occupy Kabangaja's present site. After the village was established, the situation changed. The forest disappeared, and soon there were only water reeds along the shoreline, which the fishers used to build their huts. In turn, the reeds were to disappear. The Sukuma are not, by this measure, 'natural' conservationists. A largely pastoral peoples, their practise of over-grazing grassland in an effort to control ticks (which inhabit various grassland shrubs, where they await passing livestock), has been widely commented on and is considered very destructive (cf. Birley, 1982; Charnley, 1997). Temple's (1965) examination of Sukuma land use practises revealed that his study subjects had a precise knowledge of the land and its soils. Temple concluded, however, that the land was

being exhausted, as evinced by the use of marginal soils and the cultivation of crops able to survive on low nutrients. This was attributed to high levels of population growth, itself prompted by migrants seeking better soils because of soil exhaustion in their previous settlements.

All *dagaa* fishers in the study area were immigrants from Lake Tanganyika, who moved to Kabangaja with their fishing craft and crew by rail, settling along the shore in early 1989. Crew members were often related to one another, such that if one should return home, he would be replaced by a relative. The fishers live in thatched huts made of mud, grass, boxes, blue UNHCR tarpaulin and polythene sheets. They are entirely dependent on fishing.

### **Major economic activities at Kabangaja**

The major economic activities at Kabangaja are fishing and farming. A few community members keep goats, cows and sheep. During the dry season, these are left to roam free on the farms and other public land. During the rainy season, animals are grazed in specially designated areas, so that they do not damage the crop. The animals are watered at the lake, which the fishers disliked because their drying area was being polluted with cow-dung. Fishers also kept many ducks.

The economy of households around Kabangaja was directly dependent on *dagaa* for sale or barter for other commodities. *Dagaa* is a freely available foodstuff for community members, and when the boats landed, women could be seen with bowls, pans and troughs going to the beach to ask for '*mboga*', a free fish supply sufficient for one to two day's worth of meals.

All those residing near the beach grow food and cash crops, but, in recent years, the majority of them could not rely entirely upon their fields to meet their food and financial needs due to the persistent drought. During this time, they relied on other seasonal income-generating activities such as selling peanuts, food stalls and incomes from seasonal labour migration. The latter included the building and

construction of houses, brick making, selling second hand clothing, vegetable gardening, and cereal businesses.

Fishing provided higher returns to households than any other activity at Kabangaja. Fishers' craft and gear were never idle during the course of the year. During their absence, their wives and relatives supervised fishing operations. Sometimes, departing owners lent out his equipment to close male friends or relatives so that his family could still benefit from an income during his absence.

At Kabangaja, the *dagaa* fishery dominated until 1994, when fishers began targeting Haplochromines as well. The two species of fish are caught with the same gear, and in recent years have been harvested in almost equal quantities. Wholesalers from markets far from the lake will come to Kabangaja to buy large amounts of *dagaa* to be sent to regional and national towns, such as Mwanza, Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Mtwara, or even further away to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, or Malawi.

At the beginning of 1994, an Italian investor, Polo Amadoli Italia, built a factory close to the fishers' settlement, with a view to collecting *dagaa* supplies to stock the company's animal feed factories. To the fishers' surprise, the prices offered by the firm were somewhat lower than those offered by buyers from distant markets. The relationship between the landing site and the firm were not good, and eventually, the investor diversified his supply base, and began seeking Nile perch by-products to use instead of *dagaa*.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the BMU at Kabangaja**

Kabangaja is served with several institutions located at the village cell government office and at Igombe village. It has a single primary school, a health centre, a primary judiciary court, a Ward government office and a Village government office. The village has three major committees which meet for day to day planning: the finance and planning committee, the peace and security committee and the community development committee. It also has an executive committee, which draws a Chairperson from each of the nine village cells, along with other representatives.

The sub village has two Fisheries Division (FD) staff working hand in hand with Local Government leaders at the Ward level. In July 1999, the FD held a meeting with village leaders and fishers to select Local Enforcement Units (LEUs), which were later to become (BMUs). These are landing-based groups, drawn from members of the community, which are expected to enforce government fisheries regulations. The meeting was attended by almost all of Kabangaja's fishers and a few village members and officials from the village cell government. At the time, 10 resident community members and 10 *dagaa* fishers were selected to sit on the BMU. The FD stipulated their obligations as follows:

- (a) To ensure the beach environment was clean.
- (b) To avoid and prohibit the use of all illegal gears such as beach seines and undersized nets.
- (c) To confiscate any illegal gear and report these to the FD.
- (d) To ensure all new comers to Kabangaja were good fishers and that they reported to the BMU on arrival and thereafter to the FD for allocation of a camp site.
- (e) To supervise fishing licensing at the beach level.

Beyond the physical energy of its members, the BMU did not, at first, have either the facilities or the resources on which to draw in order to fulfill its tasks. Because the fishers were used to receiving instructions directly from the FD, the creation of the BMU served to confuse

matters, especially since the BMU was – as we shall see – crippled from the outset. This gave rise to different perceptions concerning the actual roles of the BMUs. Some thought that it would bring employment to the people via salaries and allowances provided by the FD. Others thought that the BMU would be allowed to collect levies on catches as an incentive to carry out their duties. There were those who thought that the BMU would give them the power and independence necessary to resist interference from resident community members. Conversely, there were those who hoped that the BMU would be a unifying vehicle for Kabangaja's two communities.

By July and August 2000, the BMU had changed, and a completely new group selected without the knowledge of prominent *dagaa* fishers. Fishers did not understand why this had happened, nor who was responsible for its dissolution. The proclamations made by the FD at the first BMU meeting, -that fishers should be involved and consulted when it came to the management of the fishery - seemed not to apply to Kabangaja. The fishers wondered in what direction the FD was taking them, and whether or not the new BMU could be trusted. The fishers concluded that they had not been consulted because the government under-valued the *dagaa* fishery.

Fishers argued that theirs was a 'poor' fishery, providing *dagaa* for consumption to impoverished people, while the wealthy just used this fish to feed poultry. In view of the contribution they made to providing the poor with a cheap, readily available source of food, *dagaa* fishers felt that they deserved to be respected. Such respect, they felt, was not there. While the government worked hard to have the Nile perch export markets re-opened during an EU ban on these exports, they have done nothing to try and improve the markets for *dagaa*.

Such governmental attention, respondents argued, had implications for the strength and efficacy of the BMUs. At the neighbouring Nile perch beach, of Igombe, fishers had greater responsibility and authority than did *dagaa* fishers at Kabangaja. Respondents claimed that while BMUs at Nile perch landings are supposed to record daily landings, no one had asked Kabangaja's fishers to do anything similar. At Nile

perch landings, they complained, hygiene standards had improved so as to comply with foreign market demands, but no such improvements were forthcoming for *dagaa* fishers. Nile perch fishers and their landings had also benefited from road construction, and access to loans from Nile perch industrial processors. *Dagaa* landings, conversely, faced a number of problems such as poor storage facilities, filthy and sandy drying conditions and lack of reliable markets. Gibbon (1997: 4) also points out that because *dagaa* is not exported to the northern hemisphere, and its relatively small contribution to the overall food security picture, neither production nor marketing of the fish has ever been subjected to much government interest.

### **Kabangaja perspectives on management and its implementation**

In November 1999, fishers at Kabangaja were asked who they thought should be involved in the monitoring of the lake's. 51.5% replied that both community and FD should be involved, 24% said that it should be the FD alone, while 24% said that it should be community members alone (N=33). Some fishers, however, were reluctant with the use of the word 'community', and qualified their responses by saying that if the term were used, then it should apply to *dagaa* fishers alone.

When the FD first attempted to establish the BMU at Kabangaja in 1999, it was intended that *dagaa* fishers and resident community members should be equally represented on the BMU. To their surprise, *dagaa* fishers found themselves with minimum representation in the group. The new group was formed with six fishers, of which only two were *dagaa* fishers. The remaining six representatives on the BMU were all community members. *Dagaa* fishers argued that this was not satisfactory because some members from new group were beach seiners and Nile perch fishers who did not represent the interests of the *dagaa* fishers dominating Kabangaja. They complained that the two *dagaa* fishers' representatives came from "...Kigoma interior, accepting everything and not capable of analysing issues because of lack of exposure" (Zeidi pers. comm.). Non *dagaa* fishers, respondents claimed, were law-breakers at Kabangaja, and they therefore wanted to have more control than other fishers' groups. They argued that the fact

that beach seining was openly occurring at their landing was an indication of the BMU's weakness as a managerial institution.

Fishers were asked who they thought should be responsible for the sanctioning offenders who had broken fishing rules and regulations. 27.2% said only the community should, 51.5% (n=17) said Fisheries Division (FD) and 21.2% (n=33) said both the FD and the community should have this responsibility. The majority of the fishers interviewed did not think that offenders would be fairly punished if members from the resident community were involved in the process. This perspective was further reinforced when fishers were asked whether or not a local vigilante group, the *sungusungu*, should be involved in the management of Lake Victoria's fisheries. At Kabangaja, the *sungusungu* is wholly drawn from the ranks of the resident community. 75% of respondents did not think that the *sungusungu* should be involved in fisheries management activities, while the remainder did (N=33). *Dagaa* fishers interviewed claimed to have their own, secretly formed, *sungusungu* group, and if it was to this that the question referred, then they said that they would want it involved in fisheries management.

Fishers were asked what the community as a whole could do in order to ensure that community members changed from illegal to legal fishing practises. The following were mentioned:

- (a) The old BMU should be restored. Respondents did not understand why a new BMU group had been formed, or what had been wrong with the original group. They did not understand under whose authority the new group was operating, and assumed that the BMU was non-existent at Kabangaja because their own needs were not being attended to.
- (b) They argued that the FD should not change things without communicating with them. Because the new BMU had been provided with gumboots and sweaters by the FD, it was clear to them that the FD had accepted the new BMU, without, however, having consulted with the fishers.

- (c) BMU and the FD should, respondents felt, be fair when it came to monitoring fishing. When *dagaa* fishers wondered why it was that beach seining was going on, they were told it was not catching *dagaa* and they should not complain about it. This was demoralising and *dagaa* fishers were waiting to see the Fisheries Division's reaction.

About half of the respondents interviewed felt that only the FD should be allowed to determine which gears should be permitted. 31% felt that both the FD and the community should have the right to make this decision, while 19% felt that the community alone should have the right (N=32). Fishers, some argued, are the harvesters of the lake, and it does not, therefore, make sense to include non-harvesters in the management of the lake. During one focus group discussion, respondents made the following points:

- (a) Fishers should be more involved in the lake's management because management is geared towards solving day to day problems in their fishing operations. Having local fishers involved in management ensures that local problems can be solved with which management for the lake as a whole probably could not.
- (b) Because the local residents do not get direct financial benefits from *dagaa* they have no feeling for the future management of the lake, unlike those who depend on fishing for food and income.
- (c) The villagers are farmers. It makes no sense, therefore, to have farmers involved in fisheries management, just as it makes no sense to have fishers involved in farm management. As such, members of the village have no place in the management of the fishery.

Members of the resident community, however, had strong counterarguments to the latter views:

- (a) Outsiders cannot manage the lake because eventually they will go back to their original homes, rendering management efforts ineffective.
- (b) The resident communities should be the ones to manage the lake because they will always be there.
- (c) The fishers continually demand and claim the ownership of land traditionally used by the villagers, who see giving occupancy to fishers as undermining their claims over the ownership of the land.
- (d) Migrants should abide with the norms and customs of the local residents.

Resident elders at Kabangaja did not believe that immigrants to their village could be fully committed to the management of the lake's resources. One commented that '...the fishers are looking for money. How can they manage this lake?' (Lukona, pers. com.) The fishers, however, retorted that they migrated as they searched for a good catch, good prices, incomes, enough drying land and other opportunities. Anything to do with management was therefore necessary for their livelihoods.

Local residents at Kabangaja recognised they did not fully 'own' the local institutions responsible for the implementation of fisheries management. They query the reason why the village government could not have fisheries management roles. Instead, a whole, separate institution was formed for this purpose within a day. Hamid (1997: 159) points out that the creation of new organisational structures without taking into account the social processes behind existing institutions might even lead to intra-community conflict by dividing the local population or by causing the legitimacy of existing institutions to be questioned.

Cultural and norm variation from this case study poses difficulties for enhancing the participatory management of common resources. In discussions with local residents, they agreed that the relationship that they shared with the immigrant fishing community was controversial. When they had first arrived in 1989, the resident community claimed

that they had explained much of their culture and preferences to the new arrivals. In 1992, more immigrants arrived under the pretext of being there on short visits as ‘uncles’, ‘bothers’ and other relatives.

In Sukuma culture, residents explained, one who came to settle was respected and valued. One respondent explained that their sons were trained to build their own house in the family compound before they married. This settlement, it was said, would encourage him to develop the land as a livelihood within his compound and neighbourhood environment. “When I want my daughter to get married, I will advise her to seek a settled man not migrants and I would caution her to worry about cultural differences and behaviour which might not be the same as ours and hence leading to an unstable marriage” (Ngika, pers. comm.). Being a permanent settler implied a commitment to the interests of the community as a whole. The group distrusted immigrants with a culture and interests different to theirs.

Fishers at Kabangaja were also asked on who they thought should decide ‘when fishing should take place’. This was interpreted into three ways. First, the normal instituted closing seasons in breeding areas which effected from January to end of June. Rain seasons (where *dagaa* fishers experience big loss due to lack of sunshine for drying *dagaa* and dry season when they experience maximum profit. Thirdly, the local arrangement of time for going out fishing as well as landing instituted by several beaches in Tanzania as one of the local bylaw to monitor theft of gear and other illegal fishing practices. 23% said both the Fisheries Division (FD) and the community, 30% said that the (fishing) community alone should have the responsibility; and 47% (n=14) felt that the FD along should determine when fishers could leave the landing to fish.

The conflict between the immigrant fishers and resident community at Kabangaja has even articulated itself over matters such as the weather. *Dagaa* fishers prefer sunny and dry weather in which to dry their *dagaa*. When the rains then fail, community members have been known to blame the fishers for using witchcraft to hold back to rain. It was within this context that the fishers argued that if the resident

community were allowed to decide when fishing should be allowed, they might close fishing during the dry season, a time when *dagaa* fishers enjoy greater profits. Wilson *et al.* (1999: 566) discusses a case in which a *dagaa* investor was accused of using witchcraft to prologue a dry spell, while Nile perch fishers suffered. At Kabangaja, villagers also thought there was merit in a closed season during the rainy season, so that the fishers could participate in farming. The fishers, however, retorted that the villagers should already know that the lake is their farm. As a result of these difficulties, many respondents argued that the FD should have responsibility for this decision because conflict could then be avoided.

Members of the community argued that they should be allowed to determine when fishing should take place because as long as they were the permanent residents at the landing, they remained the main beneficiaries of the lake. They also added that it was important for them to make decisions concerning the restoration of discipline and to prevent the young generation and drunkards loitering around during the farming season. They said that during the dry season they had no problem with people being fully involved in the fishery or elsewhere. All of the village's labour was needed during the farming season. For this reason, leaders at Mwasonge beach in the past banned festivities and brewing during the farming season (Medard *et al.* 2000). Kabangaja residents echoed these sentiments.

35% of respondents felt that the Fisheries Division (FD) should be the only institution with the power to decide who could or could not fish. Respondents in the latter group argued that if the FD was responsible for this decision, then the chances of conflict between fishers and the community would be minimised. 39% of respondents felt that both FD and the community should have this responsibility, while 26% thought that Kabangaja's fishing community alone should have this right. Amongst the respondents in the latter groups were those that argued that if the FD was to have this responsibility, then they would favour only Nile perch fishers.

Fighting over fishing grounds between Nile perch and *dagaa* fishers has also occurred as a result of the former's intense drive to secure adequate Nile perch supplies. *Dagaa* fishers explained how Nile perch fishers forced them to set their lamps in less productive shallow waters. Sometimes, *dagaa* fishers may be prevented from fishing in productive fishing grounds, have their nets stolen, and chased away (cf. Medard, 2000).

When asked who should determine where fishing should take place, 41% of respondents answered that the fishing community should have this right because only they knew where the *dagaa* was. 31% felt that it should be the FD which decided, while the remainder said that it should be the community and the FD together (N=29).

Fishers argued that when managing the fishery in the future, it was necessary for education to occur such that people could learn about the negative effects of illegal gear. They said that some beach seine fishers did not believe that their fishing technique was destructive. In addition, irrespective of what the government had in store for them, they were the key informants on the ground, and not farmers. They complained that the resident community was intransigent, and that they should be more willing to embrace a mixed community.

The resident community said that they could work harmoniously to manage the fisheries resources with *dagaa* fishers and the FD, provided they all worked together to analyse and understand their situation and mutual experience. They would not, however, tolerate being told what to do by outsiders. They insisted that the migrant fishers would have to change to abide by local institutions, culture and perspectives. Said one elder, "...initially, we had genuinely thought that the migrant fishers had our best interests at heart. We did not worry about it then, but we do now because of their negative attitude" (Lukona, pers. comm.).

### **Additional sources of conflict at Kabangaja community**

Other socio-cultural problems have deepened the conflict between the migrant fishers and the resident community. Amongst these has been the question of land ownership. As the community of migrant fishers grew, their demand to be allowed to erect both temporary and permanent structures increased. They also wanted land on which to bury their dead. Members of the resident community, however, started to claim that their farm land extended right up to the lake's edge, and whoever constructed anything would have to pay a fee.

The fishers refused to pay, saying that land up 60 metres from the shore belonged to the government. They then asked the FD to intervene in the dispute. In response, the FD at Ward level issued a series of written instructions:

- (a) All fishers should have fishing licence.
- (b) They must use the area for fishing only and should not construct permanent structures.
- (c) Once they move away, the land they have been using should be surrendered to the responsible fisheries office.
- (d) It is an offence for any person to ask for payment for the land assigned to you by the FD.
- (e) It was an offence to humiliate anyone, and to create social unrest amongst yourselves.

The fishers reported that this intervention had helped matters, although they had still had to buy land to bury their dead. They managed to get a plot some 5 km. from Kabangaja, which they paid Tshs. 170,000/- (US \$ 212) for. Those who wanted to build permanent homes managed to get land in other areas such as Igoma, Pasiansi and Kilima Hewa in Mwanza.

Despite the FD's intervention, resident community members were still concerned about a number of issues. They said that in the old days, the traditional chief, the '*mtemi*', and his land committee arranged ownership along the lake shore. As far as they were concerned, the community had owned the land, from which they bathed and collected water. The community had only learned that the state owned a 60

metre band of lakeshore land when Mwanza had become a municipality. They wondered why it was that wealthy folk were building businesses and homes within the band, and claimed that rich land owners had been selling their land right up to the water's edge. They felt that the whole matter was very contradictory, and, in any case, were concerned about the FD playing a land planning role.

As mentioned earlier, most of the *dagaa* fishers are Muslims. According to Muslim practice, when an adult dies, only men will attend the burial ceremony. Women will remain behind at the compound of the deceased, helping in the kitchen. Resident community members, however, took offence to this, and claimed that when the Sukuma bury their dead, then the whole community is supposed to turn out, and women are not supposed to be excluded.

The village residents explained that at one time a two day old baby from the fishing community died. Like many other African ethnic groups, the Sukuma do not believe that the burial of one so small needs to be attended by the whole community. Instead, only a few elderly women performed the burial without mourning. This meant that the usual financial contribution to the home of the deceased was not made, and the fishing community was gravely offended by this, and decided that they would not, in consequence, attend the funerals of resident community members. The resident community then took the decision that no land would be offered for Muslim burial, and threatened any one of their members with fines should they attend a fishers' burial.

The deep mistrust that this conflict generated permeated all aspects of the relationship between the resident community and the immigrant fishers. For example, when an international NGO offered to sink wells for the whole of Kabangaja, they proposed that each members of the community contributed Tshs. 200/- (US\$ 0.25) towards a maintenance fund. The fishers did not believe that all members of the resident community had made their contributions, while the resident community carried out thorough follow ups on all fishers to make sure that all had paid. The fishers interpreted the latter action as unfair.

### **The implications of conflict for the management of the lake's fisheries**

Respondents at Kabangaja claimed that their new Beach Management Unit (BMU) was ineffective because of the conflict between the fishers and the resident community. The new BMU confirmed that besides achievements in beach sanitation, it has been ineffective insofar as fisheries management is concerned. For example, whenever the BMU sought to make licensing follow ups, the fishers claimed not to recognise it, and told its officers that they would only accept orders from the Fisheries Division (FD). Herein lies the question of representation on how the *dagaa* fishers were not fully involved in the new BMU.

It is clear that the perspectives of the two communities involved in this study are related to their preferences. The differences in their knowledge about the management options available to them, their perceptions of likelihood of success, and their relationship as opponents is forcing a wedge between them. In addition, the groups are unequal, and have varying degrees of access to political power, ethnicity, social power, class, influence and other factors, all of which define and affect the avenues open to the groups. Income vulnerability, levels of education, poverty, and labour patterns may also affect the ability of people to act on disputes. The absence of clearly defined legal procedures are an additional difficulty.

The fishers complained that the FD has recognised the new BMU and even provided them with equipment, without ever having satisfactorily explained why the original BMU was disbanded. There is a need for a common understanding of what had happened after the formation of first BMU and what caused the changes and who initiated them.

Barrow and Murphree (1996: 4) suggest that cohesion is a necessary facet in the development of a common identity and interest which serves to bring people together for collaborative action. Its source commonly arises from a shared history and culture, although it may be a product of political and economic factors which could force people to

share a finite resource base (Barrow and Murphree, 1996: 4). If fisheries management is to succeed, it is necessary that an interactive process is developed, organised in such a way that communities can easily adapt to its demands over time.

The disputes at Kabangaja that concern the management of the fisheries resources base are often tangled, complicated and derived from long standing conflicts between individual community members, families, institutions and other social groups. It is important to note that a seemingly minor dispute may have major implications due to the socio-economic, political or cultural conflicts in which it is embedded. The task of resolving such conflicts can be time consuming, costly, difficult and even impossible. A key starting point would be to recognise conflicts and integrating them into national Tanzanian fisheries policy to assist decision makers, administrators and planners to understand the conflicts that exist in different fishing communities and that these ought to be addressed in a participatory manner.

The lack of official awareness regarding conflicts is often the result of the centralised fisheries management system established during the colonial period, in which there is only minimal public involvement. As a result, conflicts are only dealt with superficially. When they arise, they are commonly viewed by officials as errors to be ignored or hidden, rather than as pressing problem to be addressed and learned from. Increased community participation opens doors for democracy and equity. Marks (1991: 353) suggests that in order for this to occur, local participation should be analysed in terms of who participates, what institutions are involved and what functions and objectives they have. Such an investigation is necessary at Kabangaja so that a compromise solution may be reached in the conflict that afflicts the two communities there. It is important to start with appropriate training and laying down permanent participatory structures for decision-making. All people should be involved, so as to become more responsible.

The mistrust and tension between communities in the fisheries sector are becoming apparent at various landing sites. Fortunately, the

Tanzanian fisheries sector increasingly perceives the need to seek local participation in the management of the fishery. This process should go hand in hand with community participation in the policy formulation process. Such a process can best be conceived as an ongoing negotiation amongst all members of society, seeking to reconcile their different interests according to the prevailing situation. As pointed out by Sarin (1996 in Castro 1997: 200), "...any community forestry intervention changing the existing resource use pattern impact on its different constituent groups". Again, a key challenge is getting broadly based participation in policy formulation so that people's interests can be covered.

### **Concluding thoughts**

The conflicts between the resident village population at Kabangaja and migrant *dagaa* fishers is multi-layered and complex. It initially drew its impetus from ethnic, cultural differences: the village community is mainly of Sukuma ethnicity and Christian, while the immigrants are from the Ha ethnic group and Muslim. These differences developed into complaints that the immigrants failed to respect and emulate local customs. In particular, these complaints have homed in on powerfully emotive subjects such as burial and grieving, and assistance with labour during peak farming times.

It is against this background that the Tanzania Fisheries Division arrived to thrust upon the community the whole idea of Beach Management Units (BMUs). These drew their membership from community members, and were supposed to hold sway over the implementation and enforcement of government regulations concerning the fishery. In this sense, the introduction of the BMUs represented a mechanism through which access to the fishery could be controlled. In view of the already existing divisions within the community, the controls that the BMUs represented were almost certainly going to augment and sharpen the nature of this conflict.

Indeed, the arrival of the BMU has created a forum through which the community's grievances have now become honed and even, to some

extent, multiplied. The question of who owned the land upon which the immigrants have settled is now a source of considerable grievance to the villagers, while a large debate on who holds responsibility for the fishery has commenced.

Kabangaja community members need to develop their management experience with respect to the fishery, not only so that they may solve their dilemmas, but also so that they may develop the necessary knowledge base to manage the institutional, social and economic tasks that they face. In doing so, the managerial process could be adapted to better serve their livelihoods and the demands they became upon these. Clearly, some conduit for the relief of Kabangaja's conflict is needed, which will enable the communities involved to express and solve their grievances, and where they may develop the commonality of their collective experiences in a way that may contribute to the management of the fisheries resource base.

The Kabangaja community is afflicted with poor lines of communication between the fishing and resident communities, and a lack of trust between the two of them. These problems can only be remedied if all agree to accept the different cultural backgrounds that they share, breaking down stereotypical perceptions of one another, and pave the way to constructive communication.

Solutions to these differences cannot be imposed from outside through, for example, the imposition of BMUs. The characteristics of Kabangaja's conflict are internal to their community. Outside solutions to conflicts so contingent on fluctuating internal socio-political dynamics are unlikely to work.

There is an urgent need to address issues of conflict in national fisheries policy so as to integrate conflict management into fisheries and other resource based sectors. BMUs were introduced for the purpose of better management, but many did not perceive them in this way. The only way to ensure that such differing perceptions are ameliorated is by raising the level of effective interaction between all interest groups and user groups. This is possible if conflict is

transformed into opportunities for change by both immigrant fishers and the native community to finally enable policy makers and communities to formulate applicable laws and regulations for sustainable fisheries management. It is therefore important that co-managerial efforts are designed to encourage and accommodate various lessons. Opportunities must be created for reflection and a critical examination of the successes and weaknesses of various programs so that adaptations can be made to meet specific demands at specific locations.

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### **Interviews**

Mlamba Bakari, interview, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2000, Kabangaja beach.

Ngika Ezeron, interview, on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1999, Kabangaja village cell

Lukona Sebastian, interview 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1999, Kabangaja village cell

Zeidi Abdul, interview, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2000, Kabangaja beach.